United Nations

Press Release

Department of Public Information • News Coverage Service • New York

Prepared by Central News

DH/917
24 June 1991

MONDAY HIGHLIGHTS

- Special Commission set up by Security Council to oversee destruction and rendering harmless of Iraqi weapons confirms that chemical weapons remain in Iraq following Gulf war.

- Latest round of negotiations between Government of El Salvador and Frente Farabundo Marti para la Liberación Nacional (FMLN) concludes with reported progress on question of armed forces and technical cease-fire.

- President of General Assembly calls for immediate increase in humanitarian assistance to Ethiopia to alleviate rising death toll.

- More than $1 billion owed to United Nations from Member countries, according to latest report on status of contributions.

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The Special Commission on Iraqi disarmament set up by the Security Council (in its resolution 687 of 3 April) to oversee the destruction and rendering harmless of Iraq's chemical and biological weapons, long-range ballistic missiles and nuclear materials has confirmed that chemical weapons remain in Iraq following the Gulf war. A United Nations spokesman said today that this finding was the result of a visit last week to the Samarra chemical weapons plant located northwest of Baghdad.

According to the spokesman, the inspection was carried out by a team of 20 experts from 8 different countries which verified the presence on the site of mustard gas and phosphorous nerve agent, both as bulk agent and in the form of munitions. The team which included officials of the World Health Organization (WHO) also verified the presence on site of a number of precursor chemicals acquired from abroad.

The spokesman said the Iraqi authorities were cooperative throughout the initial inspection, and that the team saw nothing which was inconsistent with Iraq's declaration to the United Nations of 18 April.

(more)

For information media—not an official record

A second inspection of the sites and further discussions with Iraqi authorities on the destruction process is taking place this week .

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A United Nations official said today that the latest round of direct talks between the Government of El Salvador and the Frente Farabundo Marti para la Liberacion Nacional (FMLN) had concluded on Saturday night in Queretaro, Mexico, "on a positive note". The official told correspondents that although no formal agreements had been expected nor were concluded, there had been progress both on key aspects of armed forces and on technical cease-fire.

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The President of the General Assembly, Guido de Marco, of Malta, today called for an immediate increase in humanitarian assistance to Ethiopia to "roll back" the rising death toll.

At a press conference in Rome following a three-day visit to the region, he confirmed that the Ethiopian authorities had agreed to cooperate. However, the international community was not doing enough to prevent widespread starvation and concerted international action was needed within a matter of days to avert a massive human tragedy. One of the most critical needs, he said, was fuel, followed by trucks to carry the food.

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The United Nations is owed more than $1 billion by its Member countries, according to a report on the status of contributions as at the end of May. Of that amount, nearly $400 million is owed from previous years, not including 1991.

The report states that the number of countries which have paid their assessed contributions in full has decreased in the last 3 years from 86 to 67.

The report notes that the United Nations Iraq-Kuwait Observation Mission (UNIKOM) faces a severe funding shortfall. Of $60 million needed for the operation, only $184,000 had been received from Member countries. Other peace-keeping operations that face shortfalls include the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) with a deficit of more than $300 million, and the new United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO), which is in need of more than $140 million.

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